



Turtle Creek Watershed Association

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Michael Kurosky
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
246 South Walnut Street
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Dear Mr. Kurosky;

TCWA is keenly aware of the disparity between state resources devoted to the Susquehanna and Delaware River Basins and those going to the Ohio River Basin. Certainly one reason for this is traditional eastern influence in Harrisburg. National focus on the Chesapeake Bay is another. This is not to say the problems these riversheds, and the people who live there, are facing are not worth the investment – they are. However, the Ohio Basin has its own set of serious issues that deserve attention and resolution.

There is strength in numbers, and we don't have it. Without concerted and comprehensive ventures in the Ohio Basin, we can never hope to gain the reasonable share of state resources necessary to begin effectively solving our problems.

Here in Southwestern Pennsylvania, we have a long history of small scale independence. We see that expressed in our numerous local municipalities struggling to function with minimal interaction. In part their reluctance to work together is based upon the reality of limited resources creating a zero sum game. One community wins, but at the expense of the others.

We see this scenario mimicked with our watershed and other environmental organizations. In both cases, the answer is to work cooperatively, develop good regional alternatives, and make enough pleasant noises to attract attention in Harrisburg and Washington.

Creating umbrella coalitions to identify common issues and goals, foster trust, and begin common sense planning is one method to overcome existing obstacles. Friends of the Mon (FoM) offers the promise of doing just this. However, turning these concepts into reality requires a competent person working full time for several years. This demands resources. Fortunately, the VISTA Program offers the services of such a person with a minimal local cash investment.

We urge the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to provide three years worth of local matching money necessary to underwrite a VISTA staff member. Allowing relative quick start-up and protecting this investment is the support network FoM already enjoys – office space, mentors, resource people, etc. The Conservancy's support will further its own mission while helping to expand opportunities for many organizations and communities in the Ohio River Basin.

Very truly yours,

Diane D. Selvaggio
Executive Director